

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 5112

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GE, GW

SUBJECT: CALL ON FRG REPRESENTATIVE GAUS

1. I CALLED ON GUENTER GAUS, WHO HEADS THE FRG PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OFFICE IN EAST BERLIN, ON JANUARY 16. AT 45, HE IS FULL OF ENERGY AND SAYS HE FINDS HIS WORK FASCINATING. HE TOLD ME HE WAS GLAD TO BE AWAY FROM THE WORLD OF JOURNALISM AND TO BE IN A POSITION TO HAVE SOME INFLUENCE ON EVENTS, RATHER THAN JUST WRITE ABOUT THEM. HE SAID HE HAD ENJOYED PROFESSOR KISSINGER'S HARVARD SEMINAR AND VALUED HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SECRETARY. AMONG THE FEW AUTOGRAPHED PICTURES IN HIS OFFICE WAS ONE OF EGON BAHR. WE TALKED ABOUT HONECKER, THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THE GDR, THE NEGOTIATING STYLE OF THE EAST GERMANS, AND CONSULAR AGREEMENTS. DCM GROVE ACCOMPANIED ME.

2. GAUS TOLD ME HE HAD MET WITH SED PARTY CHAIRMAN HONECKER THREE TIMES, THE TWO OF THEM ALONE IN EACH CASE. HE DESCRIBED HONECKER AS WELL BRIEFED ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE SAID HONECKER WAS STRONGLY INTERESTED IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE
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GDR, PARTICULARLY IN INCREASING THE AVAILABILITY OF CONSUMER

GOODS. HONECKER IS THE LEADING FORCE IN THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT BUT HE, TOO, "HAS TO COLLECT HIS MAJORITY" ON THE KEY ISSUES REQUIRING GOVERNMENT DECISIONS. HONECKER CAN'T JUST PUSH A BUTTON AND GET THINGS DONE, GAUS SAID.

3. I ASKED ABOUT MOSCOW'S ROLE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. GAUS REPLIED THAT IN BONN THERE WERE TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT. ONE HELD THAT MOSCOW INFLUENCED VIRTUALLY EVERY IMPORTANT DECISION MADE BY GDR AUTHORITIES, AND THAT CONSULTATION WITH THE SOVIETS WAS CLOSE AND CONSTANT. ANOTHER VIEW IN BONN WAS THAT MOSCOW DECIDED THE BIG QUESTIONS ONLY. GAUS BELIEVED THE LATTER VIEW TO BE MORE ACCURATE. THE GDR NOW FIGURES AS A BIG POWER AMONG EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES AND IN GAUS'S VIEW IS OBLIGED TO REFER TO MOSCOW ONLY "THE BIG QUESTIONS."

4. "AND WHAT IS A BIG QUESTION?" HE ASKED. GAUS IMPLIED THAT MOST ISSUES BOIL DOWN TO A LARGE NUMBER OF RELATIVELY SMALL DECISIONS AND CONSEQUENTLY FEW "BIG QUESTIONS" IN FACT NEED TO REACH MOSCOW FOR RESOLUTION. GAUS SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE FRG IS CONCERNED, HE RECOMMENDS THAT BONN TAKE UP A GDR QUESTION IN MOSCOW NO MORE THAN ONCE EVERY 10 YEARS, AND THAT IT BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR THE ANSWER IT GETS.

5. GAUS TOLD ME THE EAST GERMAN NEGOTIATORS HE HAD KNOWN WERE COMPETENT, BUT DISPLAYED LITTLE FLEXIBILITY. PROGRESS IN DEALING WITH THEM WAS SLOW. THEY SEEMED TO BE GUIDED BY A SINGLE BOOK WITH A SET SEQUENCE OF CHAPTERS FROM WHICH THEY DID NOT DEVIATE. GAUS SAID THAT GDR NEGOTIATORS GENERALLY SOUGHT TO HAVE THE LAST ROUND OF TALKS IN EAST BERLIN WHERE THEY COULD REFER WITH DISPATCH TO TOP DECISION-MAKERS IN THE GOVERNMENT. ONCE AN AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED, GAUS'S EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN THAT THE EAST GERMANS HAVE CORRECTLY ADHERED TO ITS PROVISIONS.

6. GAUS AND HIS STAFF HAVE FOUND IT MORE IMPORTANT AND WORTHWHILE TO TALK WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND ITS STAFF, RATHER THAN WITH MEMBERS OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES OF GOVERNMENT. "WHY TALK TO SCHMIDTCHEN WHEN YOU CAN TALK TO SCHMIDT," HE OBSERVED. AN OBVIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO MEET WITH SUCH PEOPLE. HE SAID THAT HE CONSIDERED COUNCIL OF STATE CHAIRMAN STOPH, CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER AXEN, AND DEPUTY CONFIDENTIAL

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS GRUNERT KEY FIGURES IN THE CONDUCT OF GDR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY THOSE AFFECTING THE WEST. NEVERTHELESS, HE CHARACTERIZED THESE INDIVIDUALS AS RELATIVELY WEAK WITHIN THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CHAIRMAN SINDERMANN, HE SAID, IS STRONGER THAN THESE THREE, AND MORE INFLUENTIAL WITH HONECKER.

7. GAUS TOLD ME THAT THE FRG HAS SOME 3,000 HUMANITARIAN CASES

UNDER DISCUSSION WITH THE GDR. HIS STAFF OF 75 (WHICH SOON WILL BE AUGMENTED TO 90) THUS FAR HAS HAD NO DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING ACCESS TO PRISONERS HELD IN THE GDR. WITH REGARD TO HUMANITARIAN CASES, GAUS SAID EXPERIENCE HAD SHOWN THAT IT IS BEST TO USE GDR LAWYERS, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS COMPETENT AND MOTIVATED TO OBTAIN JUSTICE.

8. GAUS TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON THE FORMULATION ADOPTED BY THE BRITISH TO ARRIVE AT A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF A CONSULAR AGREEMENT WITH THE GDR, AND SAID HE WISHED TO DISCUSS FRG VIEWS--PARTICULARLY CONCERNING QUESTIONS OF GERMAN NATIONALITY-- WITH ME AND MY STAFF IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I TOLD HIM WHERE WE WERE IN OUR OWN EFFORTS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATING A CONSULAR AGREEMENT WITH THE GDR. "DO YOU REALLY NEED TO HAVE ONE?" HE ASKED. I SENSED THAT HE WAS UNSURE WHAT THE U.S. MIGHT DO DURING THE COURSE OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT HE FEARED WE MIGHT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE INTERESTS OF THE FRG.COOPER

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